

CH-773

1917

Mattawoman Creek Foot Bridge (site)

Marbury vic.

Private

Built in 1917, the Mattawoman Creek Foot Bridge, now consisting of two rows of footings extending across Mattawoman Creek to Cornwallis Neck, was built with federal funding to provide government employees with access to the Naval Proving Ground. A crossing at Marbury avoided a seven-mile walk or drive along difficult roads. Marbury was first connected to the proving ground by a locally-built narrow and dangerous footbridge that extended from the western bank midway into the creek. In 1917 at the urging of Congressman Sydney Mudd, a unique hand-drawn footbridge was constructed that allowed coal barges to proceed upstream in Mattawoman Creek. The improved transportation led to an increase in construction in Marbury and the surrounding area.

Maryland Historical Trust

Inventory No.

CH-773

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic Mattawoman Creek Foot Bridge (site)
other

2. Location

street and number Terminus Mattawoman Creek Road not for publication
city, town Marbury X vicinity
county Charles

3. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Board of County Commissioners
street and number PO Box 2150 telephone 301-396-5815
city, town La Plata state MD zip code 20646

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Charles County Courthouse tax map and parcel: 20 p. 425
city, town La Plata liber 28 folio 572

5. Primary Location of Additional Data

- ☐ Contributing Resource in National Register District
☐ Contributing Resource in Local Historic District
☐ Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
☐ Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
☐ Recorded by HABS/HAER
☐ Historic Structure Report or Research Report
☐ Other

6. Classification

Category	Ownership	Current Function	Resource Count	
			Contributing Noncontributing	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape	<input type="checkbox"/> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce/trade	<input type="checkbox"/> recreation/culture	<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> defense	<input type="checkbox"/> religion	<input type="checkbox"/> structures
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site		<input type="checkbox"/> domestic	<input type="checkbox"/> social	<input type="checkbox"/> objects
<input type="checkbox"/> object		<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Total
		<input type="checkbox"/> funerary	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	
		<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> unknown	
		<input type="checkbox"/> health care	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> vacant/not in use	
		<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> other:	

Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory

0

7. Description

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Condition

<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ruins
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> altered

Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

Built in 1917, the Mattawoman Creek Foot Bridge, now consisting of two rows of footings extending across Mattawoman Creek to Cornwallis Neck, was built with federal funding to provide government employees living on the south side of Mattawoman Creek with access to the Naval Proving Ground. The location of the footbridge was near the village of Marbury at the terminus of Mattawoman Creek Road. Historic descriptions and photographs reveal that the bridge was approximately three feet wide with handrails on either side. A large portion of the bridge near the Proving Ground shore raised to allow coal barges access to landings at the upper portion of the creek.

8. Significance

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Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion	
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science	
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> social history	
	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/	<input type="checkbox"/> maritime industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation	
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:	

Specific dates 1917 **Architect/Builder** unknown

Construction dates 1917

Evaluation for:

☐ National Register ☐ Maryland Register ☒ not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance reports, complete evaluation on a DOE Form - see manual.)

The Mattawoman Foot Bridge is a historic site of significance because it was the first known federally funded foot bridge, and representative of the importance of the Naval Proving Ground to the development of the Marbury vicinity during the first three decades of the 20th century. The single most important and long-lasting industry established in Charles County during this period was the naval ordnance manufacturing plant built at Mattawoman Neck in 1890. The Naval Proving Ground was moved to Mattawoman Neck when transportation from the former Proving Ground at Annapolis to the Naval Gun Factory in Washington, DC became too dangerous. Nearly nine hundred acres of land was purchased for the proving ground, and later supplemented by an additional ten thousand acres on Stump Neck. In 1898, the Naval Powder Factory was constructed, and the first powder was manufactured in 1900. During World War I, transportation to and from the factory was improved by the construction of a railroad spur from White Plains in 1917.

Although the Proving Ground was moved to Dahlgren, Virginia in 1921, the plant continued to operate and began tests that would lead to the development of jet propulsion and rocket testing at the naval station. From the beginning, the plant and proving ground provided an important and stable center of employment for the county. During the war years, the plant expanded, requiring more laborers. The town of Indian Head grew up just opposite the gates of the installation. The Navy contributed to the housing and education of its employees and their children by building housing and a school at Indian Head. Further evidence of the impact on the proving ground to the adjoining region can be found in census records from 1890-1920. Not only was the election district of Pomander, including Indian Head and Marbury, the only area of growth. Between 1910 and 1920 the population nearly doubled from 1589 to 3,124. In 1920, a new census district was established in Marbury having a population of 1,392. (1)

With such a large portion of its work force living across Mattawoman Creek, the need for a lower creek landing was evident. A crossing at Marbury avoided a seven-mile walk or drive along difficult roads. Marbury was first connected to the proving ground at first by a locally-built narrow footbridge that extended from the western bank midway into the creek. Because coal barges needed to proceed to landings up the creek, rowboats or a cable-ferry completed the trip. The entire passage proved to be dangerous, leading to the death by drowning of several commuters. and after 1917 by a unique hand drawn footbridge that allowed coal barges to proceed upstream in Mattawoman Creek. Congressman Sydney Mudd was the driving force behind the federally funded footbridge construction stating that, "The purposes of this bridge is to afford direct and convenient communication to the government employees, for nearly 50% of them have homes on the Marbury side of the Creek". A footbridge was chosen as opposed to an automobile bridge to reduce the cost. The improved transportation led to an increase in construction in Marbury and the surrounding area.

Endnotes

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

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Name Mattawoman Creek Foot Bridge (site)

Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 1

(1) Carlisle, Rodney. Powder and Propellants. Energetic Material at Indian Head, Maryland, 1890-1990. pg. 96.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property .37

Acreage of historical setting unknown

Quadrangle name Indian Head

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification

The site is associated with Charles County Property Tax Map 20, Parcel 425.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Cathy Hardy/Historic Preservation Planner

organization Charles County Planning

date 4/27/2003

street and number 200 Baltimore Street

telephone 301-396-5815

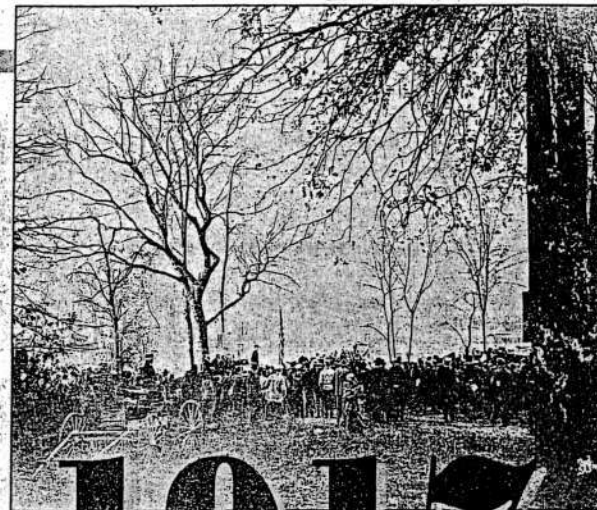
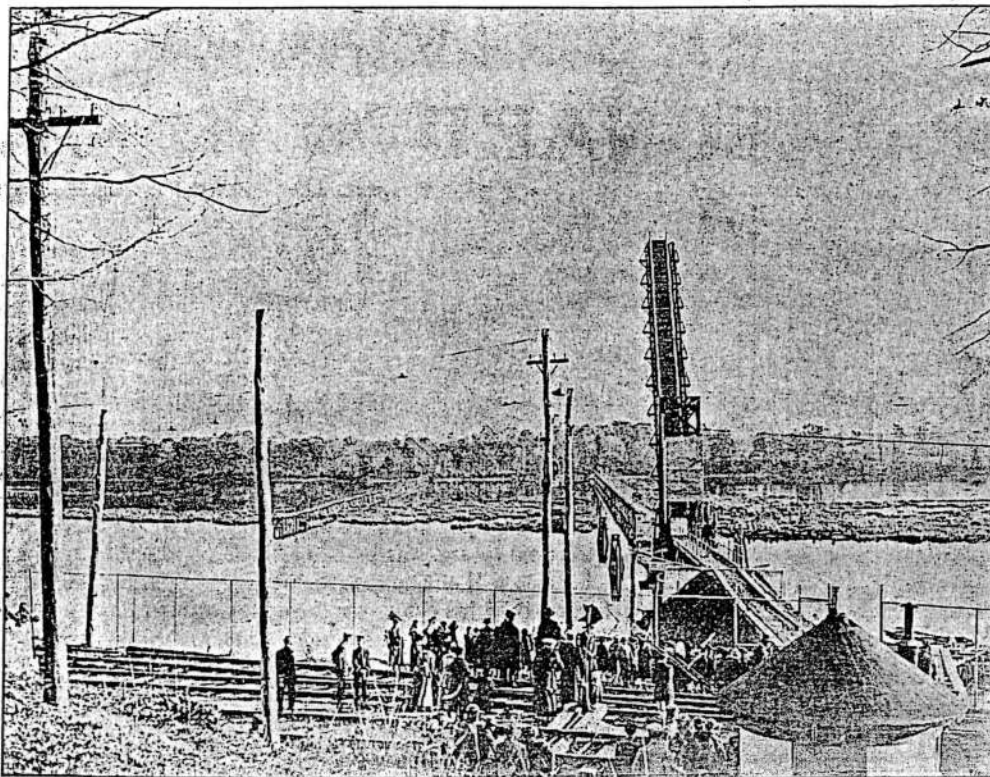
city or town La Plata

state MD zip code 20646

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

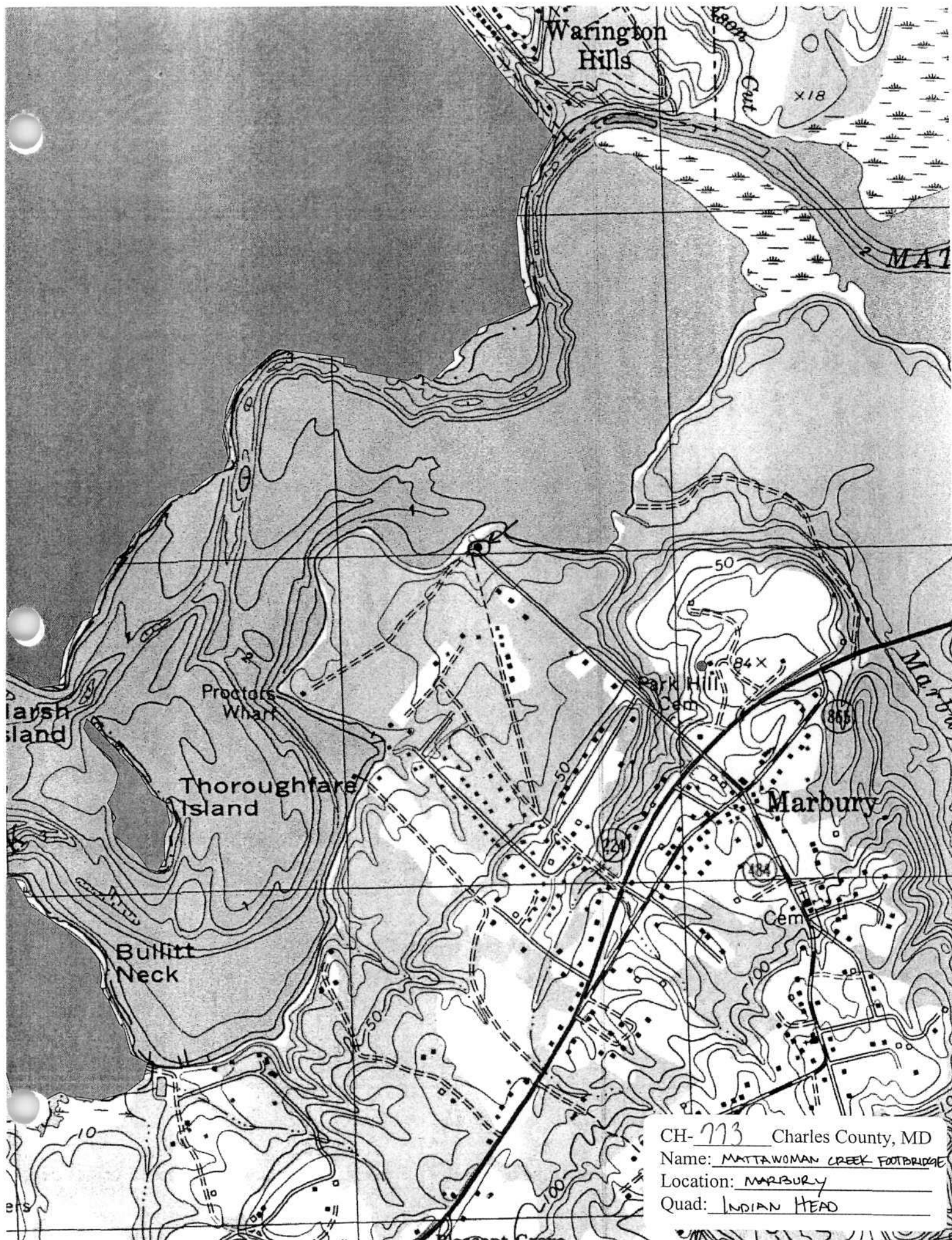
return to: Maryland Historical Trust
DHCD/DHCP
100 Community Place
Crownsville MD 21032
410-514-7600



1917

Children and other bystanders wait for a signal to cross the footbridge spanning the Mattawoman Creek to the Naval Ordinance Station, left. Above, the bridge is dedicated Nov. 5, 1917.

CH-773



CH-773 Charles County, MD
Name: MATTAWOMAN CREEK FOOTBRIDGE
Location: MARBURY
Quad: INDIAN HEAD



CH-773

MATTAWOMAN CREEK FOOT BRIDGE

CHARLES CO, MD

8/2002

C. HARDY
MD SHP 6

LOOKING N | OF |